

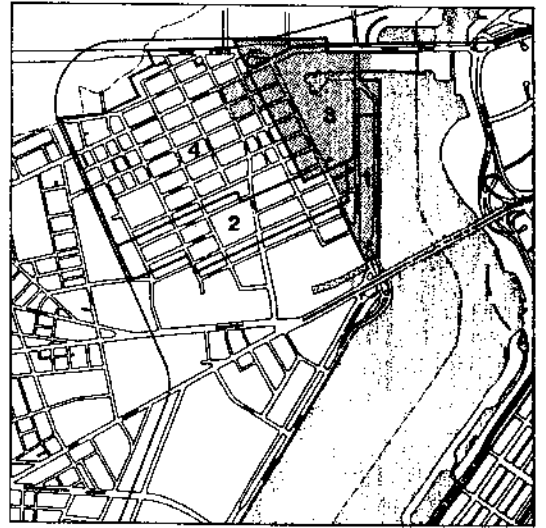
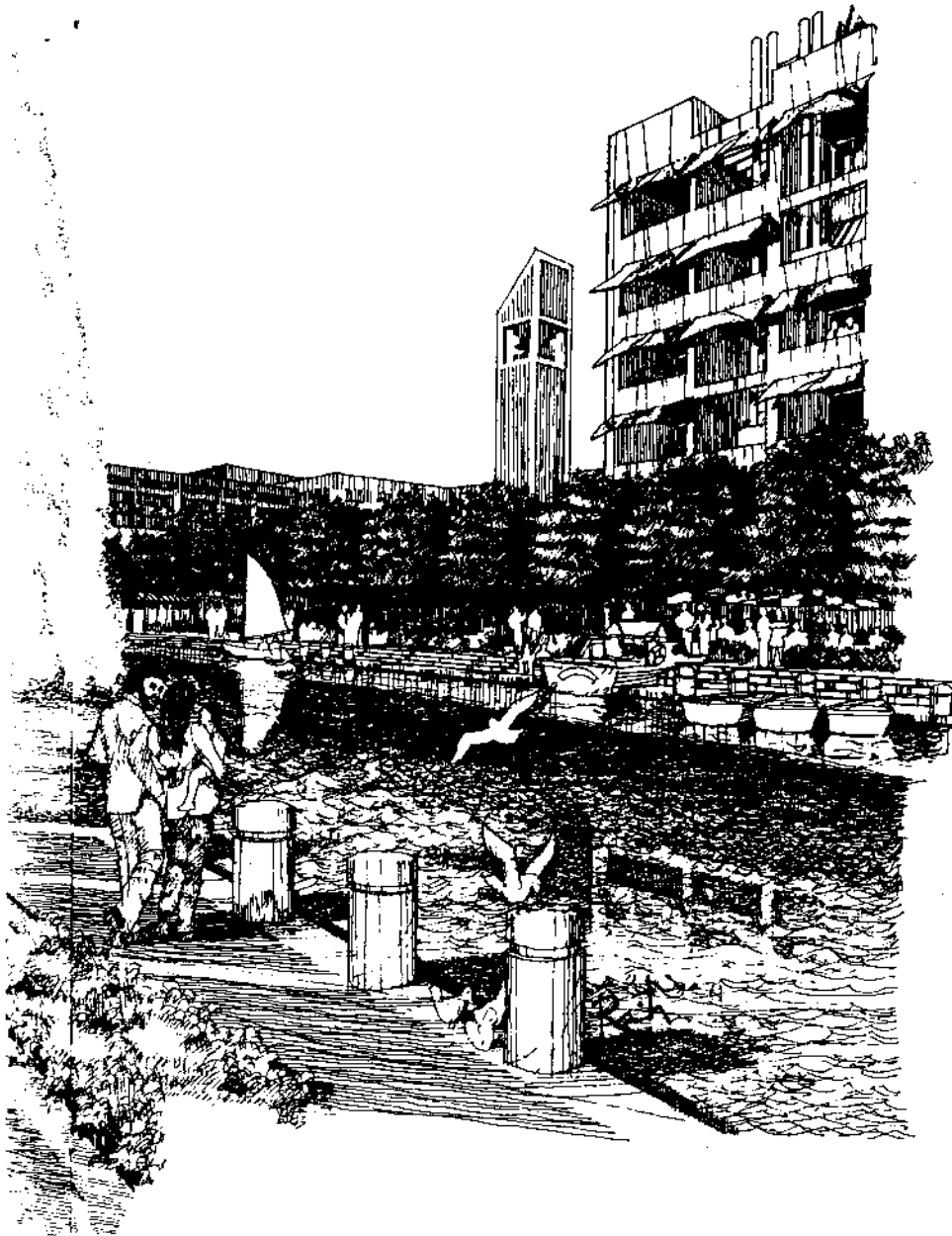
## 6 Design Proposal

The analysis of the historical perspective, opportunities and needs of interest groups provided the basis for designing an appropriate physical image for East Cambridge. This image has become the standard by which individual development projects and public improvements will be judged and approved.

The part of East Cambridge most critical and subject to strong immediate development pressure is the Riverfront area from Lechmere Square to Longfellow Bridge. Designated as the target area for the design proposal (see Figure 36), the Riverfront consists of four development districts set up by this study as follows:

1. The Front
2. Front Street (presently Rogers Street)
3. Lechmere Square and Canal (The Triangle)
4. Bulfinch Square (in Historic East Cambridge).

The districts are tied together and given form and importance by the proposed open space and transportation systems.



36. Development Districts.

The target area is the grey-toned triangle along the River Basin.

## Open Space Improvements

The overall framework of the urban development proposal is a new 16-acre public open space system which provides the existing neighborhood with access to the river and with a connection to the new development. The proposed open space system answers historic East Cambridge's urgent need for open space by locating one-half of the new park space adjacent to the existing residential community. Furthermore, the plan assists in improving the city's visual image through the rediscovery and embellishment of its forgotten assets, the River and Canal.

There are two major pedestrian focal points, The Riverfront and Lechmere Canal and a series of related spaces offering variety in size, shape and use. The projected building volumes and configurations give form and structure to the open space system, while maximizing the hours of sunlight bathing the public spaces. New housing borders the open space system, insuring 24 hour activity and effecting an informal means of surveillance by residents. Factors of both sunlight and

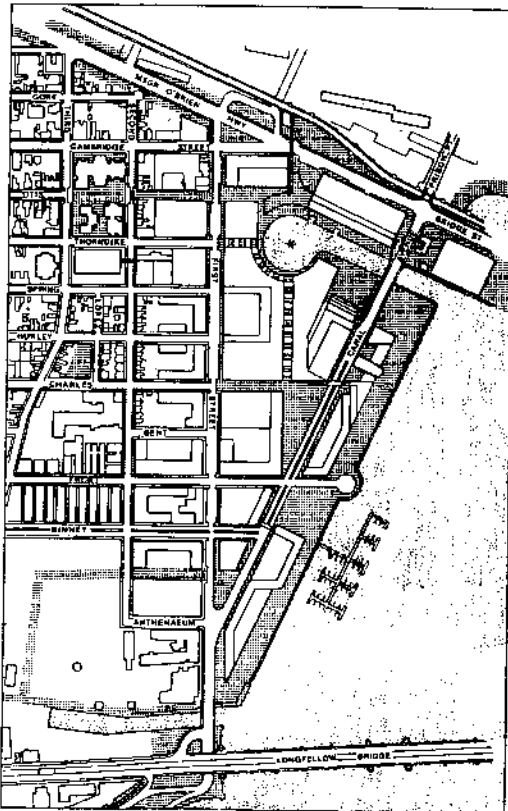
territoriality give a sense of security to the open space system that would invite users day and night.

## Transportation Improvements

The plan for roadway improvements is primarily based on the City of Cambridge's East Cambridge by-pass plan, now undergoing environmental analysis for state and federal approval.

The following roadway improvements recommended by this study are intended to improve the traffic flow and environment of East Cambridge, encouraging high quality development in the target area. These recommendations include:

- Widen Binney Street (to 4 lanes with median) from Third Street east to Commercial Avenue; add new signals at the Binney Street/Commercial Avenue intersection (The Binney Street traffic collector is intended to discourage traffic through the East Cambridge residential neighborhood, as well as to direct traffic around the Kendall Square Urban Renewal project);
- Widen Commercial Avenue, the new Canal Street, (to 6 lanes with median) from First Street north to the Monsignor O'Brien Highway, including a new Lechmere Canal Bridge;



37. Planned Open Space System.

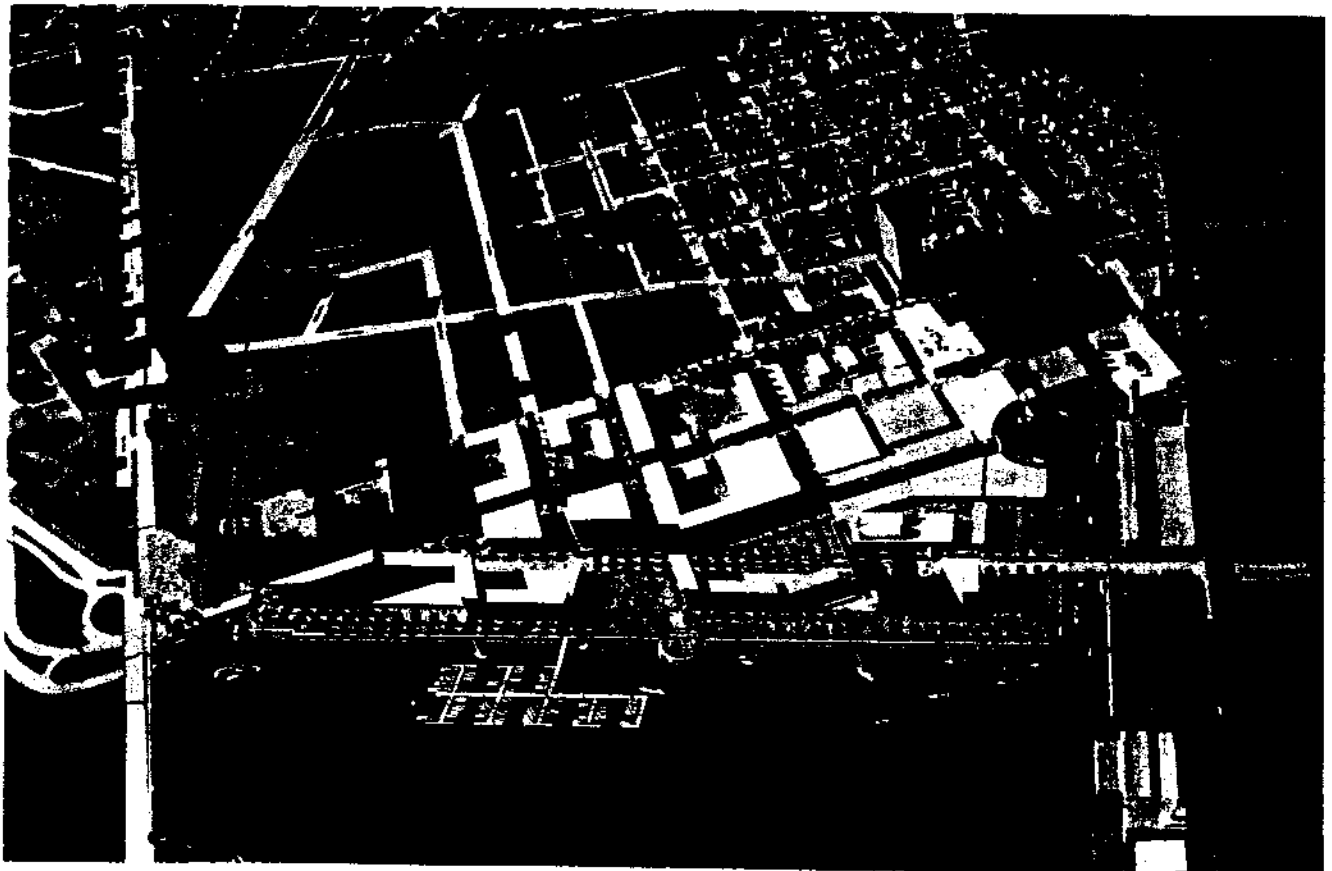


38. Eliot Bridge, Charles River  
The new Lechmere Canal Bridge will be designed to be a graceful addition to the Charles River Basin.



39. Planned Traffic Circulation.  
A one-way circulation system in the residential neighborhood would discourage unnecessary through-traffic.

- Widen the Monsignor O'Brien Highway from Lechmere Square east to Commercial Avenue;
- Improve the approach capacity at the Monsignor O'Brien Highway/Commercial Avenue intersection by the addition of new lanes and signals coordinated with those at Lechmere Square;
- Modify the northbound connection of Memorial Drive to Commercial Avenue in the southern portion of the project area (the road network at the Longfellow Bridge approach should be altered in a manner which links Memorial Drive's open space with that of the Front);
- Close the five-lane Cambridge Parkway to through-traffic and replace it with a more suitable access road and public open space (the low-speed road would allow emergency/service access when required).



40. Photograph of East Cambridge Riverfront Model.  
New planned development is represented by the lighter buildings in the center of the photograph. This view clearly shows the open space system linking the neighborhood directly to the Canal and River.

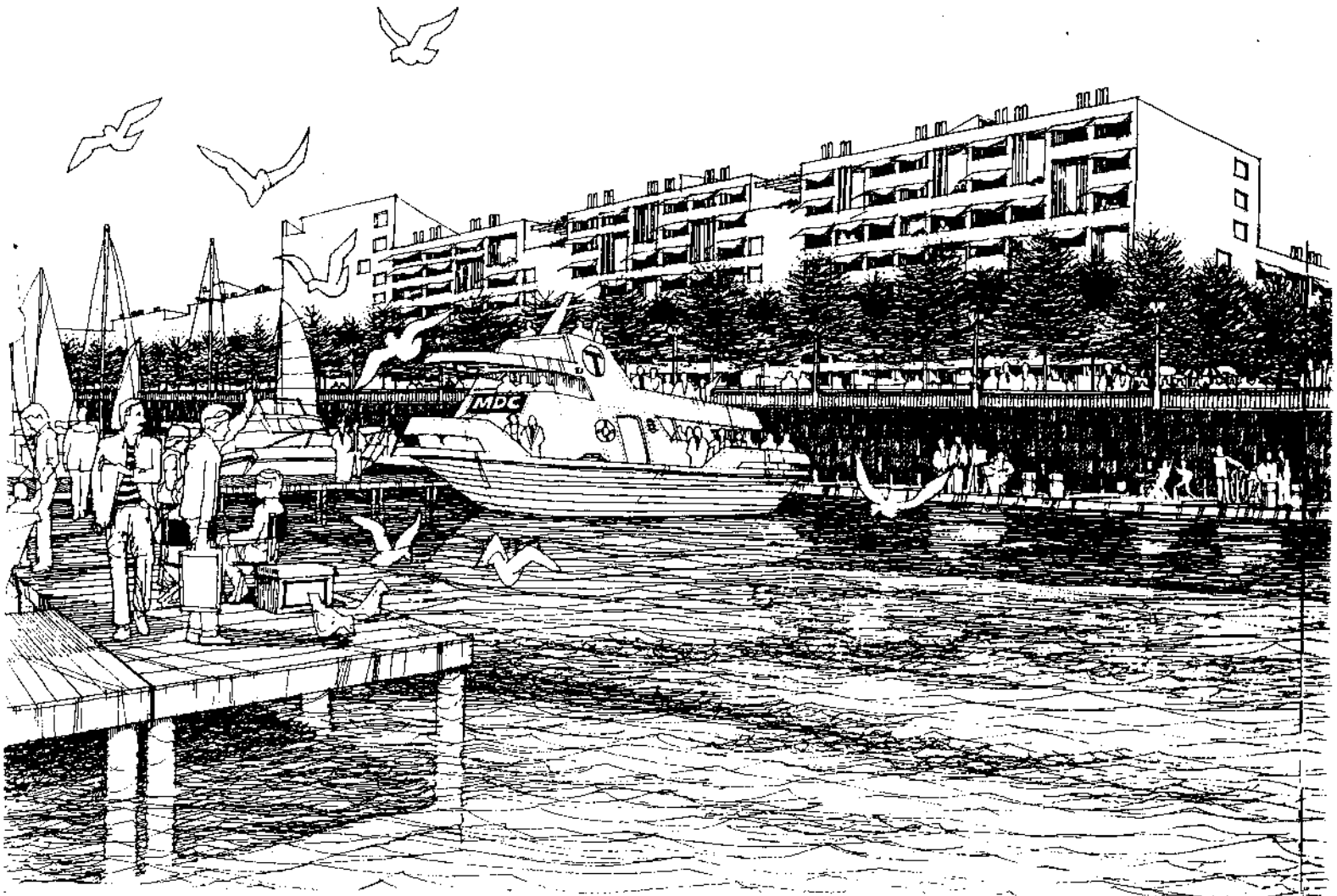
## The Front

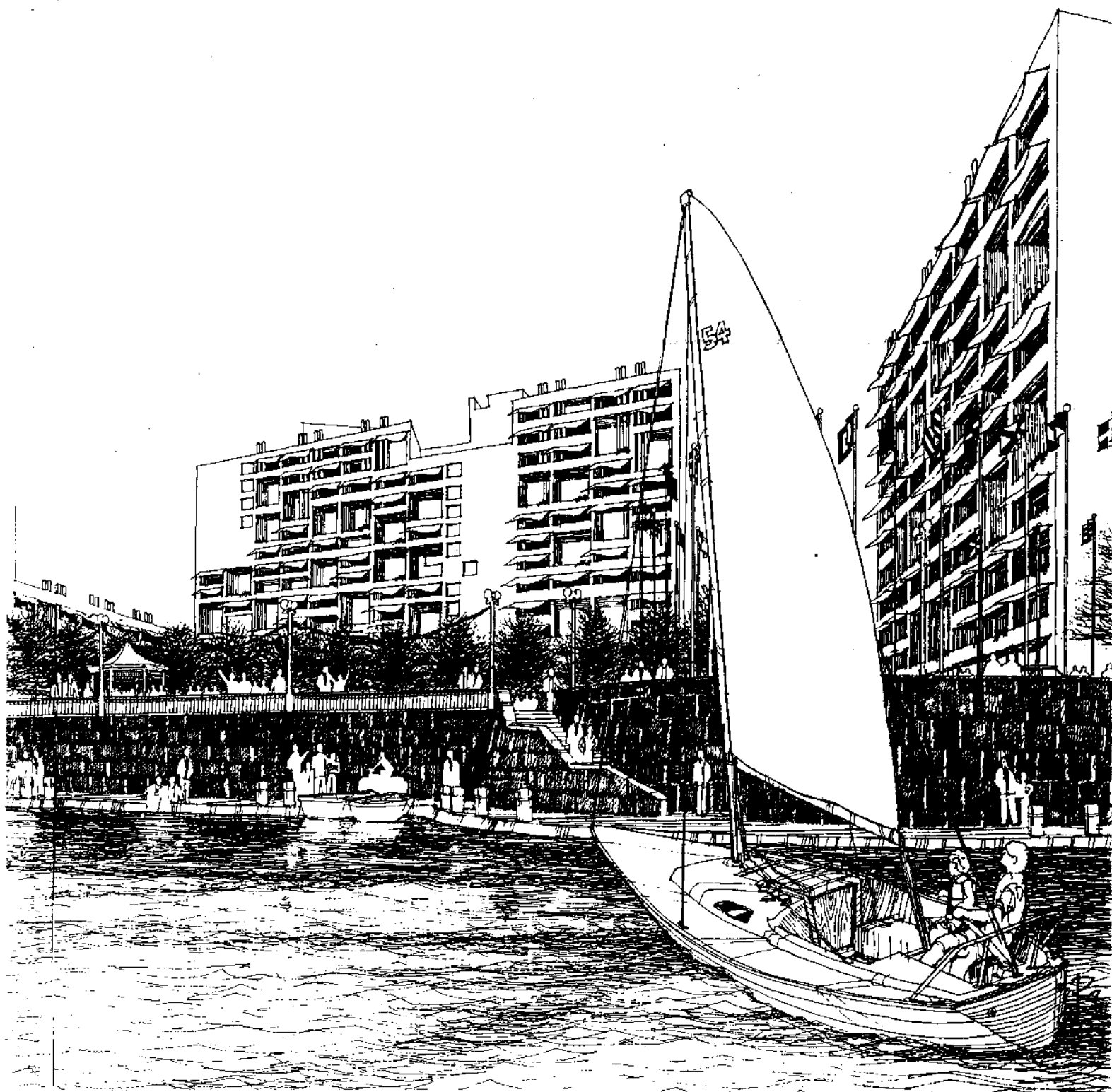
The Front draws its name from Charles Eliot's unfulfilled vision of East Cambridge's Riverfront Park, as related in the chapter on history. The overall concept of this development district is a major public river front park combined with new housing. This will enable East Cambridge to present an exciting new positive face toward Boston and the Charles River.

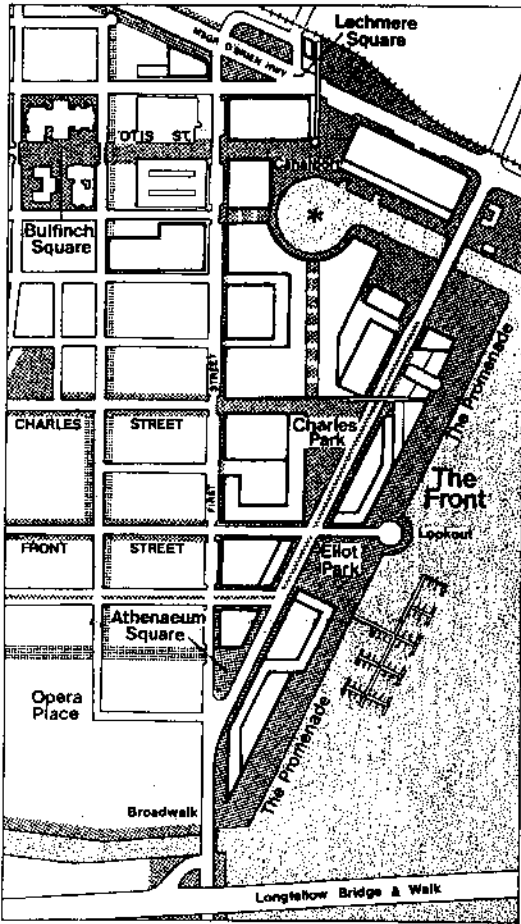
It is virtually impossible to recapture "The Front" proposal of 1895 in detail, because only one-quarter of the area of the original proposal is still in public hands. (That area is the Cambridge Parkway under control of the Metropolitan District Commission). However, the creation of an important public open space on the riverfront, a "jewel" in

Eliot's terms, can be realized with the closing of the Parkway to through traffic. The design proposal extends the open space back to Commercial Avenue at a central point, forming Eliot Park, enlarging the riverfront park and providing a needed focal point along the 2400 foot long front.

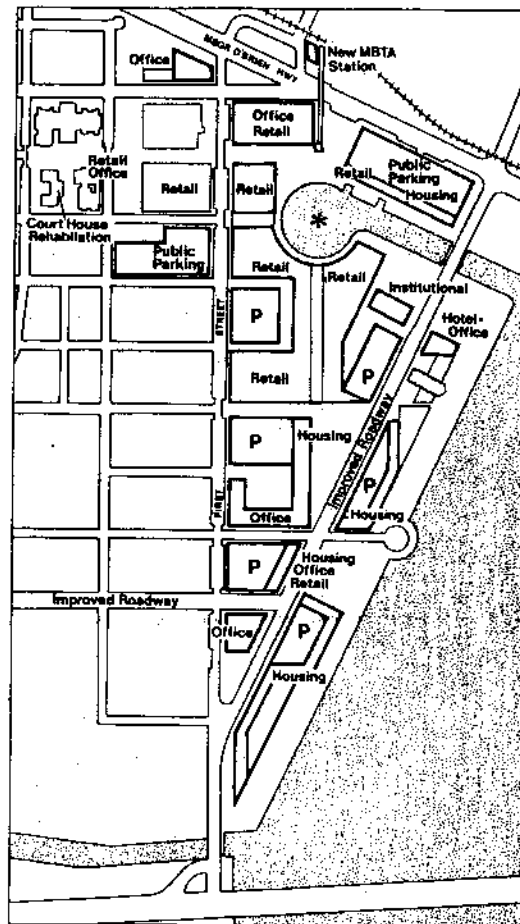
This focus is emphasized by both the construction of the Overlook at the end of Front Street and the creation of a new public marina jutting out into the river. Furthermore, Eliot Park enables a driver on Commercial Avenue, the new extension of Memorial Drive, to enjoy visual access to the Charles River Basin.







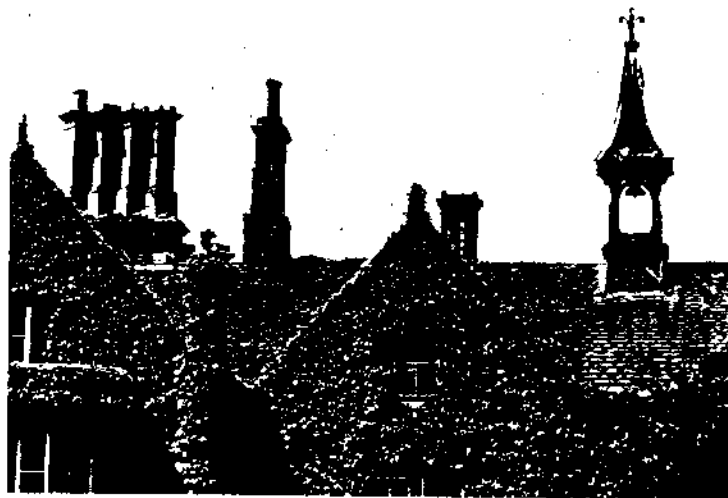
41. Planned Open Space.



42. Planned Land Use.

The most suitable use for new private development at The Front is residential with limited retail and office space at Eliot Park and Broad Canal.

The massing of the housing responds to the river and open space system, historic East Cambridge's fears about excessive height, sun/shadow configurations, and views of the Charles River, Longfellow Bridge and Boston. The massing of structures builds in intensity and height toward Eliot Park; the tallest building abuts Eliot Park furthest from the river on the western side of Commercial Avenue. (This building will have office and retail use in its lower floors and offer impressive views of both The Front and the Charles.) The housing collectively hugs the open space system and visually contains the Charles River, much like the buildings across the river in Boston's Back Bay.



43. Castle Combe, England.

*The beauty of an elegant architectural silhouette has long been treasured by the public. The importance of such silhouettes is increased when bordering an important public open space system such as the Charles River Basin.*



44. York, England.

*Many of the most successful riverfront parks are passive in nature and are simply designed with materials that reinforce the human scale.*



45. Hyde Park Gazebo, London, England.

*Designed focal points within the open space system give structure and identity to the public domain. More importantly, they encourage activities, planned and spontaneous, to occur.*



46. Rogers Street.

*Many fine turn-of-the-century industrial buildings can be re-used as high-quality technical office space.*



47. Boston Waterfront.

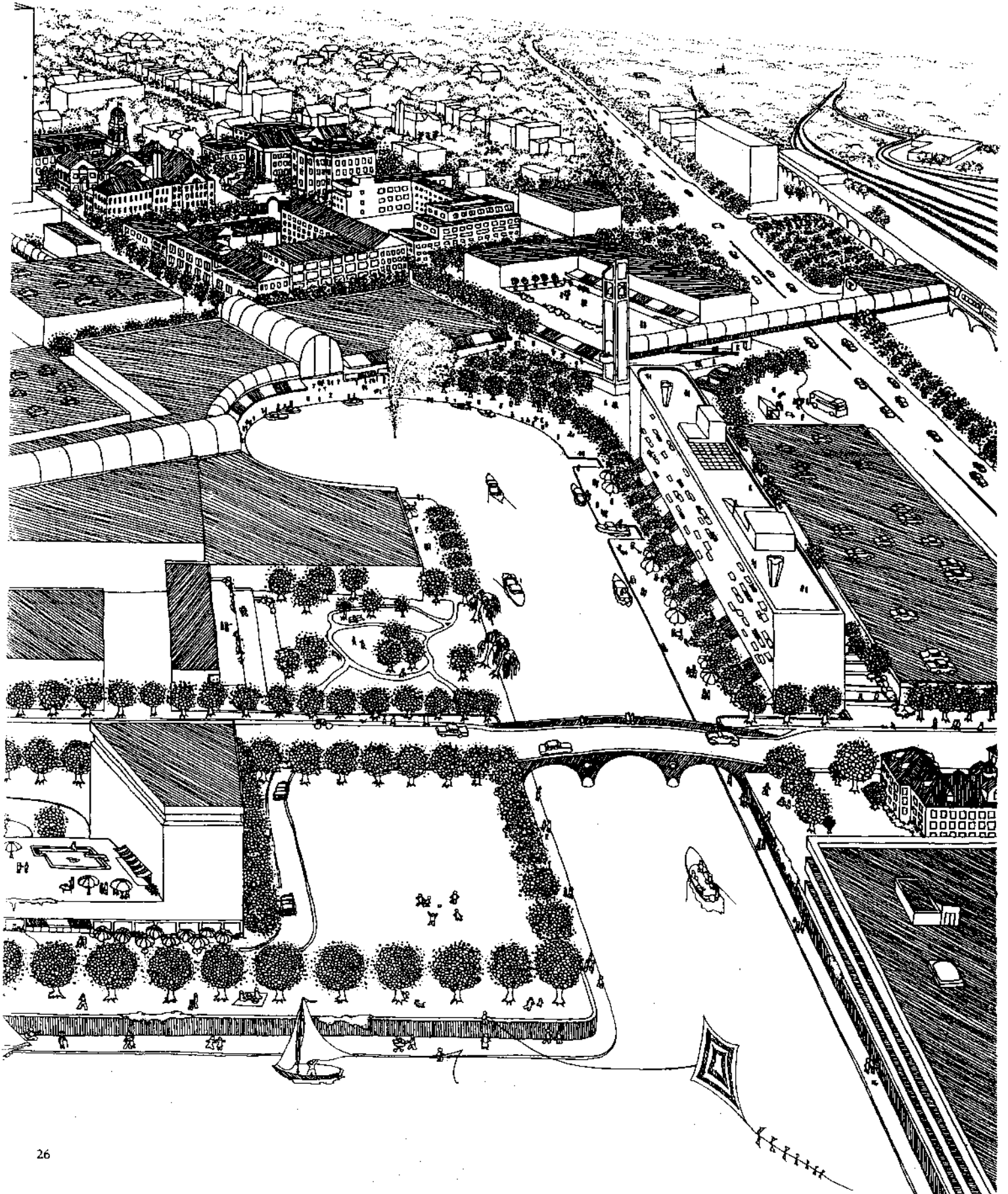
*Successful downtown waterfront revitalizations celebrate the human presence and scale, not only in well-designed housing but through additional features which emphasize and animate the water's edge.*

Varied and articulated roof lines are intended to form an appropriate silhouette along the river. (Skylines continue to be one of the few characteristics of architecture that holds the public's interest and delight.)

The Front's realization can only have a great beneficial effect on the image of the Charles River's lower basin and the City of Cambridge and it will serve as a catalyst for new development further inland along Front Street.

## Front Street

Rogers Street, renamed Front Street, is planned to be an important new prestigious boulevard for technical industry and office use. Front Street will be redesigned with new landscaping and street furniture as the major linkage between this development district and The Front. With Binney Street widened for east-west through-traffic, Front Street will serve local traffic, as well as pedestrian and bicycle access to the Overlook on the river. Front, Bent and Binney Streets define the technical office district. Planned uses are compatible with the East Cambridge residential neighborhood. Reasonable height and setback regulations, as well as possible street closings, are needed to minimize impact on the existing housing stock.

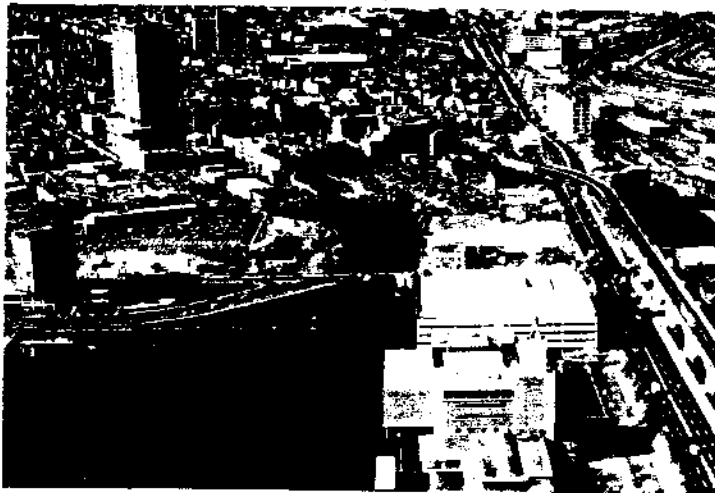






49. Bath, England.

*Bath's river park is an excellent example of open space that respects and beautifies an existing body of water, making it an integral part of a great city. Lechmere Canal will be of similar scale and can be of equal significance to Cambridge.*



50. Aerial Photograph.

*The photograph, taken in late 1977, shows: the unsightly entrance to Cambridge by car and mass transit, acres of parking and largely vacant buildings surrounding Lechmere Canal, and the proximity of historic East Cambridge to the canal area.*

48. Aerial Rendering of Lechmere Canal.

*The public open space system focuses on the canal area and creates a unique port image for East Cambridge. (Note the restructuring of Lechmere Square, re-aligning Monsignor O'Brien Highway and the Green-Line Transit Station, the lower pedestrian walkway at the base of the granite wall.)*

## Lechmere Canal and Square

The objective of the Lechmere Canal and Square Development District is to attract new high-quality private development through: 1) the public initiative of a major upgrading of the Lechmere Square entrance to the city and 2) the reclamation of the Lechmere Canal as an important focal point in the planned open space system.

The Lechmere Canal development is designed as a 24-hour activity center of retail, institutional, office and residential uses, oriented primarily toward pedestrians. The design completes the shape of the Canal by terminating it in a circle almost 300 feet in diameter. The focal point of the Canal development is a fountain rising 100 feet in height at the center of the circle. The pedestrian bridge from the new transit station is on an axis with the fountain.

The axis is reinforced with a tall bell tower which serves as an entrance to the Canal Park. (The tower is reminiscent of the large church bell towers lost in East Cambridge.)

Encircling the southern edge of the Canal is a high quality diversified retail center. The low two-story profile of the retail structures will not intrude on the existing community. This allows East Cambridge's silhouette to remain visible and also permits a great deal of sunshine to bathe the Canal area. The retail use intensifies activity at the water's edge, creating an exciting port image, and provides a sheltered link between the Canal and The Front through an enclosed shopping arcade.

With the construction of the new Charlestown Dam, the River Basin's water will be stabilized to within an 6" variation (compared to the 10 foot variation now existing), thus permitting the entire development to be lowered to within inches of the water, eight feet below adjoining street levels. One can walk to The Front from the Canal by going under a new Lechmere Canal bridge (see Figure 48) on the planned lower walkway.

The housing block with retail (restaurants, cinemas) at ground level is physically the backbone of the Canal. All dwelling units enjoy both an overview of the Canal open space and a southern exposure. The higher massing of the housing block and proposed Canal office structure help subdue the strong winter winds' effect on pedestrian areas.

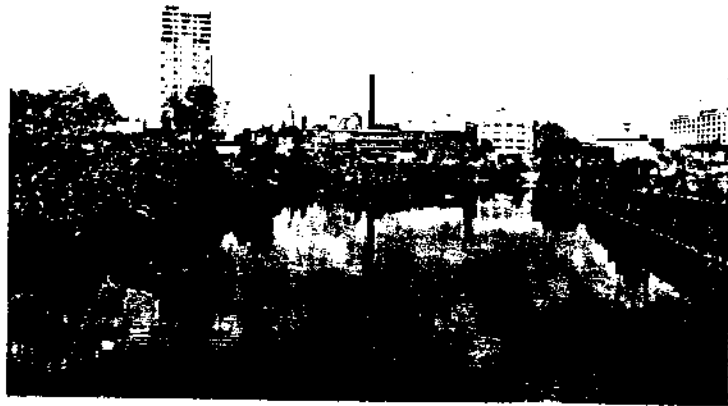
Lechmere Square's future as a major entrance to the city rests almost totally in the hands of public agencies — the MBTA, the

MDC and the City of Cambridge. The design proposal incorporates a new auto and bus circulation system which is feasible by relocating the Lechmere transit station to the north side of Monsignor O'Brien Highway. Safe pedestrian access to Lechmere Canal and historic East Cambridge is obtained by an enclosed pedestrian bridge to the Canal. A new transit station location not only improves circulation, but also gives Cambridge additional open space at the Square where the MBTA elevated railway will be removed.

The beautiful Green Line viaduct, designed by Peabody & Stearns, would be extended to the new station, relieving an unsightly eyesore on Monsignor O'Brien Highway and the entrance to the city. With this transformation, future office use at Lechmere Square is appropriate because of renewed visibility, improved transportation and transit links and open space improvements.

**51. Lechmere Canal.**

*Even in its forgotten state, Lechmere Canal's potential is evident. A portion of East Cambridge's historic silhouette can be seen in the background, with the Bulfinch clock tower rising one hundred and thirty feet, just left of center.*



51.

**52. Dubrovnic, Yugoslavia.**

*Dubrovnic's beauty and excitement come not only from its pedestrian emphasis and colorful port, but also from its sense of scale, continuity, and focus. Uniformity of materials (granite walls and orange tiled roofs) creates a greater sense of a unified community. The two- and three-story structures along the port are human-scale. Their relatively low profile at the water's edge allows the viewer to be well-aware of each structure and its importance. Imaginative building silhouettes give further variety and life to the scene.*



52.

**53. Burlington Arcade, London, England.**

*The Burlington Arcade is one of the most successful enclosed shopping streets in the world. Its success is due to its direct integration with the urban environment of London, unlike most shopping malls in America. It is elegantly designed to be an attraction in itself. The Lechmere Arcade connecting the Canal to the Front has a similar potential.*



53.

**54. Reston, Virginia.**

*The presence and celebration of water is made an integral part of Reston's Lake Anne Center by aligning the public gateway to focus on the fountain.*



54.

## Bulfinch Square

The objectives of the Bulfinch Square design are: to link historic East Cambridge with the Lechmere Canal open space system and transit station, to find an appropriate adaptive use for the Bulfinch Courthouse complex, and to answer the area's urgent need for public parking. These goals will benefit both the Middlesex County Government and the existing neighborhood by creating a transition area of land uses between the neighborhood and the new riverfront development.

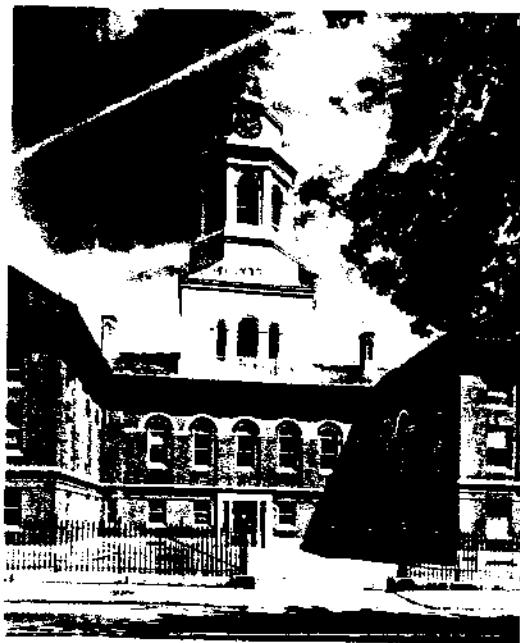
As mentioned earlier, the fate of the Bulfinch Courthouse complex has been a major concern of the County, City and community. Previous studies have indicated that high renovation costs make the reuse of the Courthouse by a private developer extremely unlikely. All concerned parties agree that the only alternative to demolition is the renovation of the exterior with public funds, followed by private sector development of the interior. A similar method of preservation and adaptive re-use was used in Boston's highly successful Quincy Market.

The 30,000 square foot Bulfinch-designed portion of the Old Superior Courthouse is now under active study for use by the East Cambridge neighborhood and the City at large as a multi-ethnic cultural arts center

with possible library use. The remainder of the Courthouse complex, the 60,000 square foot Clerk of Courts addition, could be privately developed at a reasonable cost into shops, restaurants and high quality professional office space.

The urban design plan reinforces the feasibility of renovating the Courthouse by creating Bulfinch Square as an integral part of the open space system. The Square, located between the Courthouse and Registry of Deeds and Second and Third Streets, is created by the closing of Otis Street. Bulfinch Square will be an elegant public space, sensitive to the historic architecture. County employees, neighborhood residents and visitors to the library and arts center will have the opportunity to share a quiet relaxing moment in the one-acre park. The block-long connection between the canal and Bulfinch Square will be upgraded with widened sidewalks, new planting, street furniture, and proposed building improvements on Otis Street. The owners of the Irving and Casson building plan to increase ground floor retail activity, reusing the building's neglected arcades. Deran Confectionary Company would then have the potential for similar retail upgrading and for making their chocolate-making process visible to passersby.

Little of this is possible without a workable solution for a desperately needed public parking facility (parking needs will be increased with Bulfinch Square's completion). The urban design plan proposes a new parking



55. Bulfinch Courthouse, the Old Superior Courthouse  
This view is from Third Street, facing Quality Row.



56. Clerk of Courts Addition.  
Exterior detail.

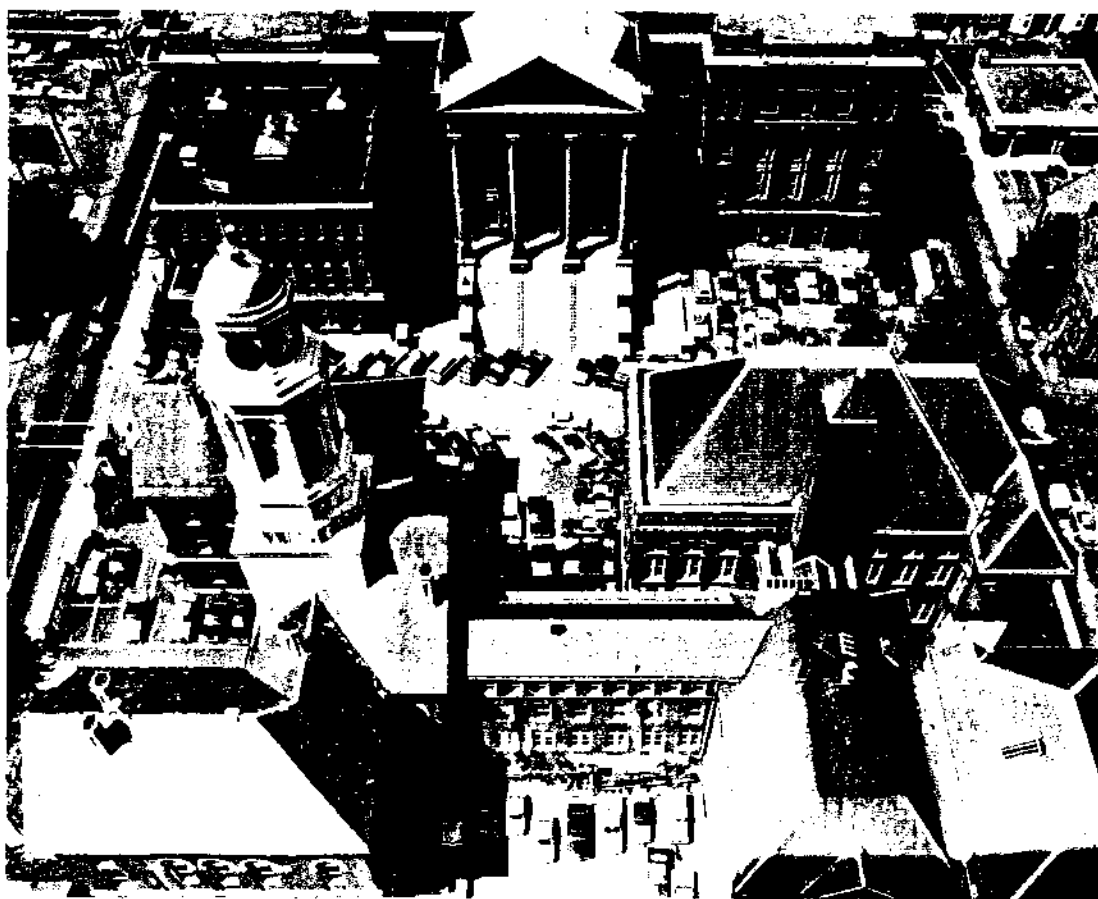
garage to be located between First and Second Streets and between Otis and Spring Streets (across the street from the new Courthouse). This location not only serves the needs of the County and historic neighborhood, but could also serve as evening, weekend, and holiday parking for the Canal's retail development.

The urban design plan for East Cambridge cannot be fixed at any one point in time. It will evolve in response to the interests of involved groups and to changing conditions. The stated goals of the plan are increased employment opportunities, improved tax base, a quality environment, and preservation of historic East Cambridge; these goals can only be achieved through a carefully considered, coordinated development effort. Toward that end the urban design plan has formulated detailed district development policies (found in the appendix) and an implementation strategy necessary to make the plan a reality.



57. Bulfinch Courthouse.  
*Interior stairwell detail.*

58. Aerial Photograph of Otis Street.  
*Otis Street, bordered by the Registry of Deeds at the top of the photograph and the Bulfinch Courthouse below, will be closed to traffic and redesigned into Bulfinch Square. All existing on-grade parking will be moved to a new adjacent public parking structure.*



## 7 Plan Implementation

The East Cambridge Riverfront Plan will be implemented in phases over a number of years; the implementation will include public facility improvements, private investment, development controls, promotional efforts, and, possibly, fiscal and economic incentives. The plan will involve governmental agencies at all levels, private property owners, developers, and community groups. The key to success will be a coordinated, cooperative effort between the public and private sectors; neither can do the job alone.

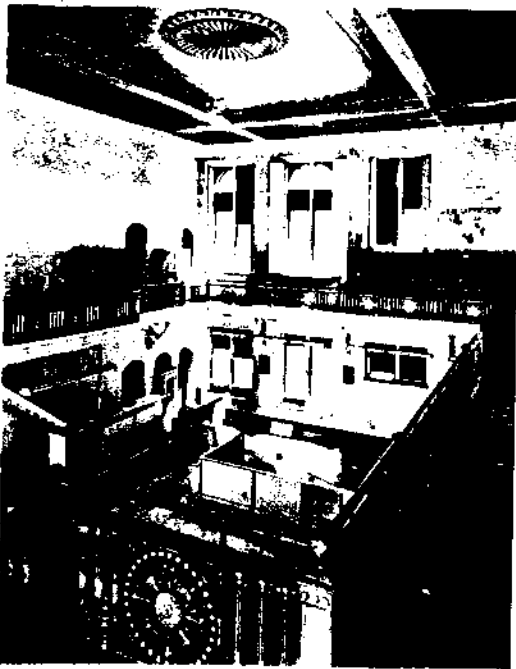
### Public Improvements and Actions

The City will be responsible for implementing a wide range of public improvements. The major actions are discussed below. A more detailed list of actions and improvements is presented in a separate appendix.

As part of its current work on the East Cambridge/Lechmere Project, the Community Development Department is preparing a series of rezoning amendments to the City's Zoning Ordinance. The proposed amendments would replace the current industrial zoning of the project area with new development controls which will be consistent with the East Cambridge Riverfront Plan. The new regulations will be based on the four design districts delineated by this plan. They will include: 1. a residential and office district along the Front; 2. a technical office district along Bent, Rogers and Binney Street; 3. a mixed use district in the Lechmere Canal area; and 4. a limited commercial, transitional district along Second Street.

The City will develop various proposals for State and Federal funding to implement the urban design plan. This effort will involve applications for funding from Urban Development Action Grants (UDAG), Block Grants (CDBG), the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR), Urban Systems, Urban Mass Transit (UMTA), State Self-Help, and the National Park Service Historic Preservation Grants Program.

As illustrated in Figure 61, the construction phasing of the major public improvements begins first at the northern part of the triangle in the Lechmere Canal area and in the area around and including the Bulfinch Building. Major park improvements, improvements to the Bulfinch Building, improvements to the Lechmere Canal,



59. Clerk of Courts Addition, Interior.  
A number of beautiful spaces with elegant detailing exist in the Bulfinch Complex. Their suitability ranges from restaurant and retail use to quality office use.



60. Courthouse and Square, Circa 1860.  
Before the Clerk of Courts Addition in 1887, the Bulfinch Courthouse's significance was expressed by its position on the public square facing Second Street. The Riverfront Plan aims to restore its honored position in the public's eye once again.

parking facilities, and roadway improvements will be initiated in this phase. Design, acquisition and relocation for the mass transit station will begin also, although the completion of this aspect of the project will take four or five years.

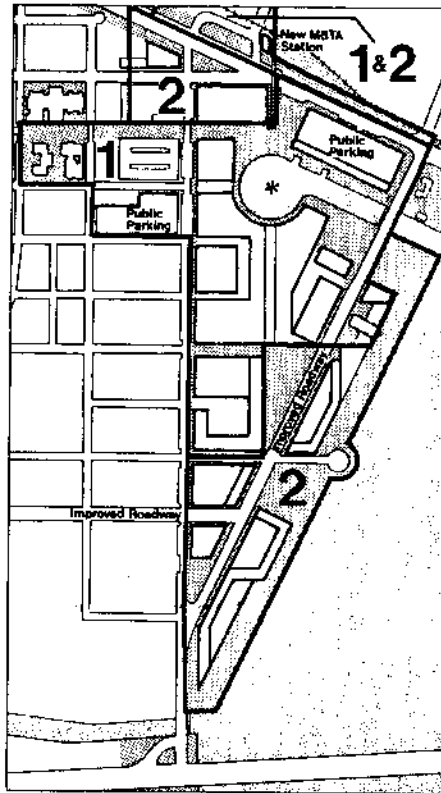
The second phase will include open space development along the river, "The Front," and the nearby parks. Public improvement in this phase will also entail improvements to the Lechmere Square area. Several improvement efforts will continue throughout the project. These include street and sidewalk improvements, various open space improvements and the Neighborhood Stabilization program.

The specific public improvements planned for the project area, the estimated cost of these improvements, the five year capital improvement program and the detailed budgets for each improvement are presented in Figure 65. The planned improvements would represent close to \$50 million of public commitment to the project. Detailed information on the open space and roadway improvements is presented in a separate appendix. (The design scheme presented in this publication is a guide; it is anticipated that aspects of the scheme might change. The capital improvement program and time schedule outlined in Figure 63 are included to serve as a guide. Changes in the program and timing are expected as the project is implemented.)

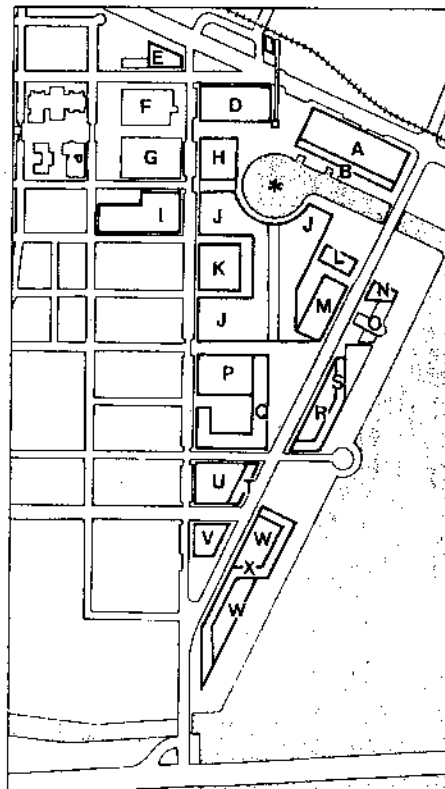
### Private Improvements

Private development activities are anticipated as a result of increased opportunities, public actions, and negotiations and agreements between the City and private developers. While it is not possible to anticipate the exact form of all private development that will take place, this project assumes an economically feasible and likely form that meets the intent of the development policies and reflects private commitments to date. These policies prescribe development objectives and list design guidelines that any acceptable private development must follow.

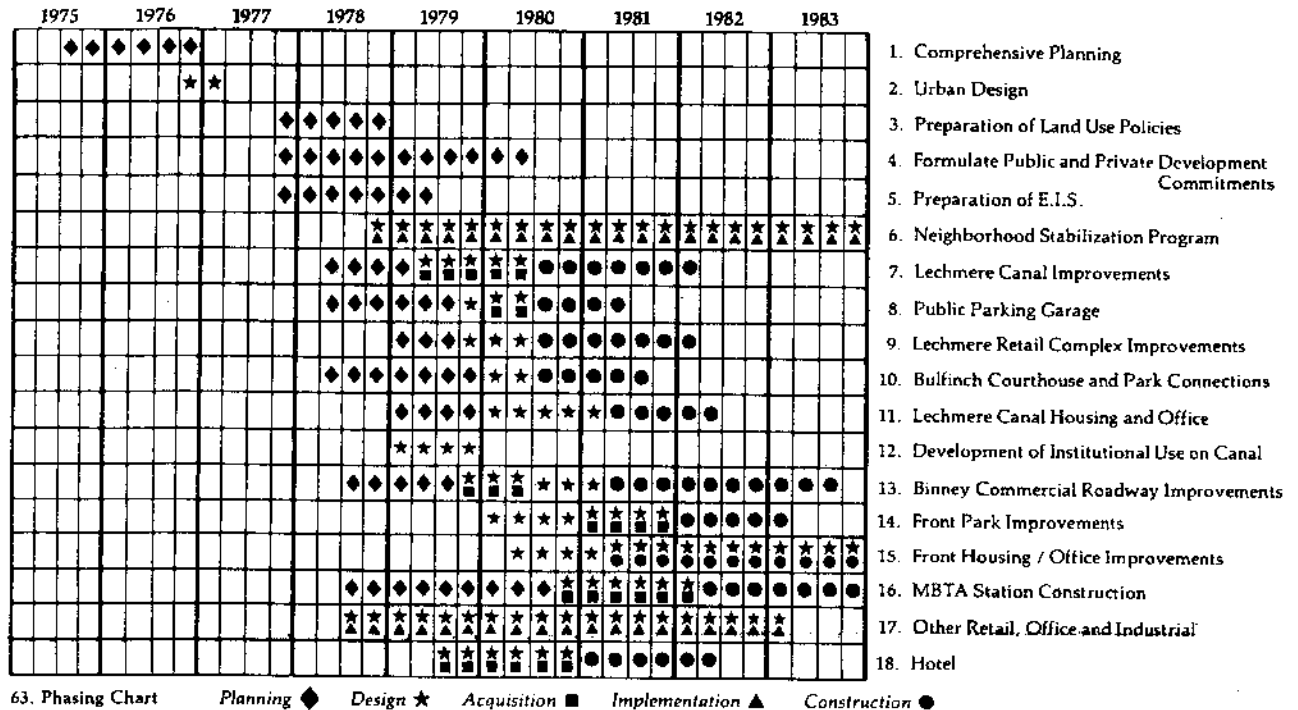
Private improvements planned for the project are identified on Figure 62 by letters that correspond to letters on the Descriptive Private Improvements Summary Table 64.



61. Phasing.



62. Planned Private Development. (Revised December 1979) see page 36



#### Site A

A four-level parking garage and cinema complex is located near the intersection of Commercial Avenue and Monsignor O'Brien Highway. The garage provides parking for the cinema, buildings on Sites B and D, and (exclusive) replacement parking for the MBTA.

#### Site B:

A six-story condominium apartment building containing 120 housing units and ground floor retail is located between the parking garage (Site A) and the Lechmere Canal. Potential location for several Section 8 rent subsidy units.

#### Site D:

Four levels of general office space over a two-level retail "galleria" are located near the intersection of Cambridge and First Streets.

#### Site E:

A six-story general office structure attached to a smaller three-story general office structure with surface parking is located at the site of the present MBTA transit station in Lechmere Square.

#### Site F:

The present Deran Confectionary Factory is located on Cambridge Street between First and Second Streets. Improvements are planned.

#### Site G:

The existing building located on First Street will be used for retail stores, artisans' shops and professional offices.

#### Site H:

A retail complex is located at the end of the Lechmere Canal with two levels facing the

Canal and one level facing First Street.

#### Sites J, K:

A major regional shopping center with a parking garage-delivery building at Site K is located along First Street from the Lechmere Canal to Charles Street. The center contains two "anchor" stores, smaller stores, restaurants, and a luxury food store. Two levels of shops face the Canal. The anchor store at Charles Street is also two levels high with the remainder of the center being one story. A large pedestrian arcade links the Canal with "Charles Park" and Charles Street Extension.

#### Site L:

A small institutional use facing "Lechmere Canal Park" at Commercial Avenue is ideal for this location.

#### Sites M, N:

An addition of 200 rooms and support facilities for the hotel is located at Site N on Commercial Avenue. Two-thirds of the space in a parking garage across Commercial Avenue at Site M is to be used by the hotel and one-third by the shopping center.

#### Site O:

The existing Sonesta Hotel is located at Site O on Commercial Avenue.

#### Sites P, Q:

A six-story technical office building is located at Site Q on Rogers Street between Commercial Avenue and First Street. It is served by a three-level parking garage at Site P. This site may also be integrated into the Retail J, K.

#### Sites R, S:

Condominium housing and office uses in a

structure following a varied silhouette of 7, 6, and 11 stories and containing 184 units; located along "The Front" at Site S. Ground floor convenience, retail, basement parking, and a two-level parking garage is located at Site R facing Commercial Avenue.

#### Sites T, U:

A 17-story, mixed-use building is located on Commercial Avenue at Site T, opposite the "Front Park" at Rogers Street. Retail uses are on the ground floor, general office space occupies the second to fourth floors, and 100 condominium units are on the fifth through seventeenth floors. Parking is in the basement of building Site T and in 2½ levels of a garage at Site U.

#### Site V:

A seven-story general office building is located at Binney Street between Commercial Avenue and First Street.

#### Sites W, X, Y:

Condominium apartments and rental offices in a structure with a profile varied at 5, 6, 11, and 13 stories is located along "The Front" from Binney Street to the Broad Canal (Sites W and X). The structures contain 358 housing units, ground floor convenience retail, basement parking, and a two-level parking garage at Site W. The currently vacant Carter's Ink Building located on First Street at Athenaeum Street (Site Y) is to be preserved and reused.

#### Site Z:

The Bulfinch Court House Building will be restored with a combination of cultural, small retail and office activities in the building.

The construction phasing of the private development will generally follow that of the public actions. New development would first take place at the northern end of the project near the Lechmere Canal, followed by second phase along the river, and by a third phase at the lower end of the Lechmere Triangle at the southern end of the project. Timing of construction in the Lechmere Square area would be dependent upon the timing of the MBTA Lechmere Station relocation. (See Phasing Chart Figure 63.)

It is anticipated that all land acquisition, construction of facilities and site improvements will be carried out by private land-owners and developers with no public participation other than development guidelines and limited technical assistance. The City may formulate a corporation which would have the power to take property by eminent domain should this become necessary to implement a specific and integral private development project. It should be emphasized that the City does not anticipate the necessity of eminent domain proceedings to implement the private development aspects of the project, since the most important parcels of land are in the hands of six private land-owners and in public ownership.

Public policies, to assure that private development is realized in a desirable form and content are part of this project. The authority behind these policies depends on zoning. A

Planned Unit Development provision added to the zoning ordinance as an overlay district is proposed as a means of enforcing the development guidelines.

### **Coordination and Responsibility for Implementation of Public Improvements**

All public improvements involving land acquisition, construction of facilities and site improvements will be coordinated by the City and implemented by the public agency responsible. Where necessary specific operational agreements will be developed.

- The Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) will work with the city on certain open space acquisitions, roadway improvements and operation of facilities.
- The Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) will work with the City to implement the transit station project.
- The State Department of Environmental Affairs and the State Department of Public Works will work with the City in finalizing grant agreements and in implementing open space and roadway development.
- The County will work with the City on the renovation of the Bulfinch Building.
- The City will implement most of the open space acquisition and development, the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, roadway designs, development controls, creation of urban street and sidewalk amenities and new roadways, landtakings by eminent domain and other administrative affairs.



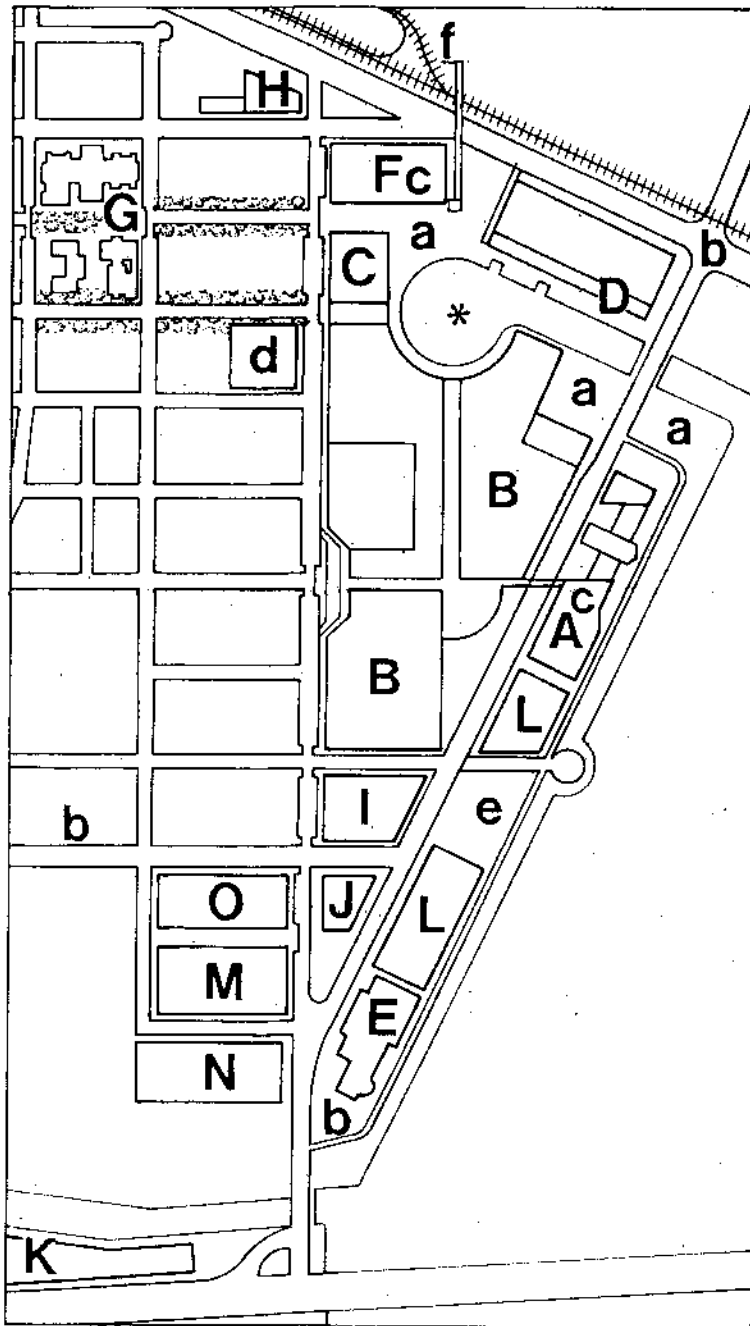
(Figures in thousands)

	Cost	77-78	78-79	79-80	80-81	81-82	82-83	Acq./Dem.	Reloc.	Design	Construct.	EIS
MBTA Transit Station	20,827				800 (a, r) 1,000 (e, d)	200 (a) 2,827 (dem)	16,000 (c)	3,527	300	1,000	16,000	
Parking Garage (200 spaces)	1,980			500 (a, r)	1,480 (d, c)			420	80	80	1,400	
Parking Garage (300 spaces)	3,200				1,200 (a, d)	2,000 (c, d, r)		1,200	100	300	1,700	
Parking Garage (600 spaces)	4,840			250 (d) 390 (a, r)	4,200 (c)			350	40	250	4,200	
Neighborhood Stabilization Program	1,250		250 (c)	250 (c)	250 (c)	250 (c)	250 (c)				1,250	
Historic Rehab. for Bulfinch Courthouse	6,200			700 (d)	5,500 (c)					700	5,500	
Open Space Program	10,321			1,692	3,151	2,310	3,168	3,408	300	489	6,124	
Street Improvements	11,675	75 (EIS)		600 (d)	4,000 (a, r)	3,500 (c)	3,500 (c)	3,500	500	600	7,000	75

(d) Design  
(c) Construction  
(a) Acquisition  
(e) Engineering  
(r) Relocation  
(dem) Demolition  
(EIS) Environmental Impact Statement

Private & Public Improvements  
Summary Table — December 1979

Private Improvements



East Cambridge/Lechmere Area  
Planned Development  
(December 1979)

**Site A:**  
A Hotel expansion. The expansion includes approximately 250 Hotel rooms, restaurant, conference facilities, and structured parking.

**Site B:**  
A major regional shopping center. The center will contain 450,000 to 600,000 square feet of space and consist of two major anchor stores, smaller retail stores, restaurants and parking.

**Site C:**  
A retail office complex of about 60,000 square feet.

**Site D:**  
A condominium apartment building containing 120 housing units, 40,000 square feet of office, retail and parking.

**Site E:**  
A 75,000 square foot research institute with on site parking.

**Site F:**  
A 200,000 square foot building with office, retail and housing uses. Will be constructed on air rights to the 200 car public garage.

**Site G:**  
The renovated Old Middlesex County Courthouse Building. This 90,000 square foot building will contain office, retail and community activities.

**Site H:**  
A six-story general office structure with surface parking.

**Site I:**  
A mixed-use building opposite the planned "Front Park" at Rogers Street. Uses will include office, retail and housing. Parking would be provided on site.

**Site J:**  
A retail/office site to be used by existing businesses relocated due to public improvements.

**Site K:**  
A 600,000 square foot Riverfront Office Park.

**Site L:**  
Housing sites for market rate housing with the possibility of limited subsidized housing.

**Site M:**  
Renovation of the 340,000 square foot Athenaeum Press building for office and retail.

**Site N:**  
Renovation of the 140,000 square foot Carter Ink building for office use.

**Site O:**  
Retail/office uses. Preference to relocated businesses.

Public Improvements

- Site a:**  
Lechmere Canal Park
- Site b:**  
Project area roadway improvements
- Site c:**  
200 car public parking garage
- Site d:**  
600 car public parking garage
- Site e:**  
Public Park "The Front"
- Site f:**  
Site of proposed new MBTA Lechmere Station

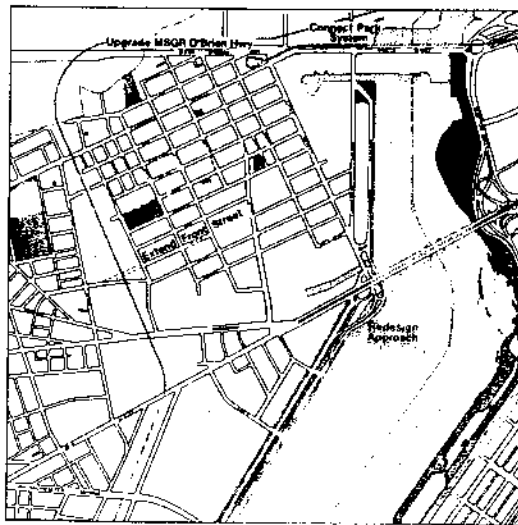
## 8 Benefits from the Riverfront Plan

It is clear that the Riverfront Plan will bring major benefits to Cambridge and the region, giving life to a declining industrial area while protecting a valuable and historic neighborhood. The public and private improvements at the core of the plan are its most important benefits; further, those improvements will generate other fiscal and economic benefits for the city.

The public improvements have been discussed in full. The rejuvenated waterfront and Lechmere Canal will be part of a sixteen acre park system. A new transit station, a more efficient roadway system, and new public parking facilities will be much-needed additions to the area. General beautification (such as new street and sidewalk paving, lighting, and street furniture) is planned; historic preservation and reuse of important area buildings are an essential part of the plan.

In addition to the public amenities, over \$130 million dollars worth of private development will take place including:

- Rehabilitation of up to 500 existing housing units which will help stabilize the East Cambridge neighborhood
- New construction of up to 650 housing units on the river
- Construction of over 300,000 square feet of new retail space
- Construction of up to 600,000 square feet of new office space



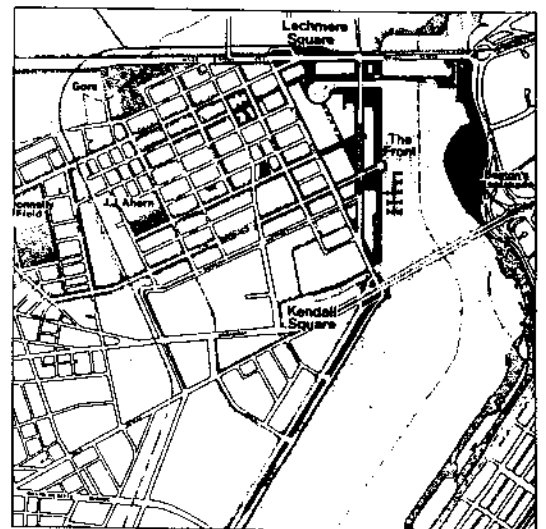
67. Further Recommendations.  
Four additional improvements beyond the target area would successfully link it to adjacent areas.

These public and private improvements will promote further fiscal and economic benefits:

- Over 4,000 construction jobs will be created during the development phase.
- Over 4,000 retail, office, restaurant, and service jobs will be developed.
- A net increase of \$5 million per year in city property taxes from the planned development area is projected. This could mean that the 1985 tax rate for the entire city will be up to \$20 less than it would be without the Riverfront Plan.
- The economic benefits in general will act as a catalyst for further growth and upgrading far beyond the target area.

There are several major recommendations that are presently beyond the scope of this project; if implemented, these improvements would add greatly to the quality of the plan and would create more efficient links between the target area and adjacent areas. These improvements should be considered in future area-wide planning:

- Implement the MDC's plans for a linear park along the North Terminal's waterfront. This would connect the East Cambridge riverfront with the Charlestown Navy Yard Park System.
- Upgrade Monsignor O'Brien Highway to parkway status. The MDC's long-range plans would help to eliminate blight along



68. The Riverfront Plan Fulfilled.  
The East Cambridge Riverfront becomes a major part of a much larger system of development.



**69. Longfellow Bridge Approach.**

*The Approach, designed as the link between Memorial Drive's Esplanade and Longfellow Bridge, once offered dramatic views of the Charles, Beacon Hill and Back Bay for Cambridge promenaders. The Esplanade's beautifully detailed railing, curved granite walls and mature trees still exist at the Approach, but its relationship with the river and its unobstructed views of Boston were lost in the 1950's. A highway addition connecting Memorial Drive to Cambridge Parkway was built to improve traffic flow. The flow of traffic has been improved, but at a great cost of turning a significant public place into a no man's land.*

this roadway and create a more cohesive edge to the residential neighborhood. The possibility of eliminating unnecessary and dangerous intersections by closing connections with Second and with Sciarappa Streets should be considered.

- Extend Front Street (presently Rodgers Street) to Portland Street. This would give Neighborhoods 3 and 4 safe access to "The Front" park and the river.
- Redesign riverside roadway ramps at the Longfellow Bridge and Broad Canal. The existing situation has created an unsightly and unused area along Memorial Drive between Wadsworth Street and the Longfellow Bridge. This condition prevents a safe and attractive open space connection between the East Cambridge's riverfront and the existing park land along Memorial Drive (see figure 69).



70. Cambridge, England.



71. Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

The presence of the Charles River gives added meaning to the entire plan; in a general sense, the development triangle is an innovative link between the river and all of Cambridge. The waterfront has always had a special significance for the city dweller. Historically, it has been a center of activity, commerce, meetings, and romance. From the magnificent waterfront plazas of Venice to the playful river lights along the Thames, cities have treated the waterfront as a ceremonial space. Amsterdam, famous for its canals, magnifies the water's beauty by lighting the outline of its elegantly-curved bridges. It must not be forgotten that the waterfront of Cambridge can become just as beautiful.

The strongly pedestrian-oriented open space will include both passive and active areas. Quality planting, park furniture, granite paving, and riverfront lighting are planned to enhance the waterfront space. One section of park will be terraced to within one foot of the canal, linking up with a lowered walkway along the riverfront. The scene can be enriched by the use of color in awnings, signage, sculpture, and planting. A fountain will become an exciting visual focus for the entire canal area. The plan calls for massing of buildings that is sensitive to wind and to exposure for sun; also a background of housing will offer informal security for the parks nearby.

New and exciting opportunities for East Cambridge have been proposed in this plan; yet dedicated and coordinated effort will be essential to bring these proposals to reality. Strategies might shift and new opportunities appear, but the basic intentions of the plan must be respected to take full advantage of East Cambridge's situation on the Charles River and in the Boston area.

## 9 Appendix: District Development Policies

This urban design plan sets forward aspirations and conceptual proposals for the East Cambridge Riverfront. Though future development may depart from some of the details presented in this document, the spirit of the plan should be continued during the actual project execution phase. The following principles and design guidelines have been prepared for the four development districts delineated during the study. These principles and guidelines are intended to provide a policy framework for evaluating proposed public and private actions in the four riverfront districts.

### District 1: The Front

#### Principles

Stress development of the riverfront area that would present a new, exciting face toward Boston from across the Charles. Create a positive entrance to the city.

Upgrade Cambridge's major neglected physical asset, the riverfront between the Longfellow Bridge and the Museum of Science, and make it an integral part of the city.

Provide for new residential development of the Front that is set apart to avoid interference with the fabric of urban life in the East Cambridge residential community.

Develop new amenities along the Front that are easily accessible to and inviting for present East Cambridge residents.

#### Design Guidelines:

##### Use:

Advance the Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot concept of a major public park, "The Front." Consider altering Cambridge Parkway to accomplish this purpose.

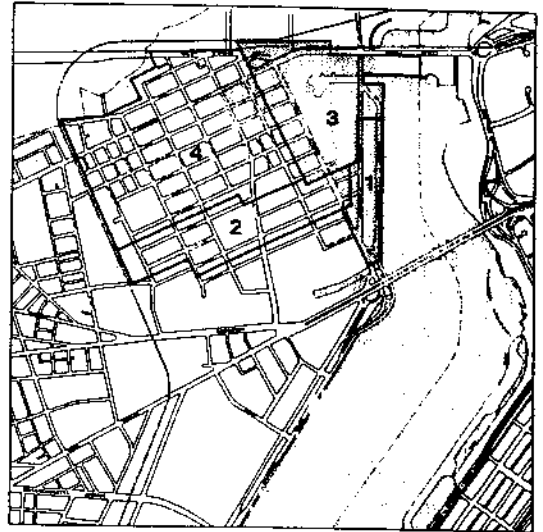
Encourage a residential mixture of all incomes small and large units. A combination of housing and commercial use is less desirable but is possibly an economic necessity.

Use building materials and imagery that reflect proximity to water. Encourage brick facing on riverfront buildings and colored canvas awnings.

Riverfront park should include a walkway along the river at the base of the granite retaining wall, uniting the Broad and Lechmere Canals.

##### Scale:

Encourage a variety of building heights between 5 and 14 stories. Locate lower buildings at the north end of the area and nearest to the existing residential community. Place the highest buildings around the focus point, away from and at angles to the river.



Anticipate a maximum overall floor area ratio of 2.5.

Encourage residential densities of 85 units per acre.

#### Form:

Maximize potential views of the river and Boston through building arrangement and orientation.

Roof lines and elevations should be designed to create visual interest and avoid the monotony of a uniform development wall along the river.

Design building massing and orientation to minimize shadows on the riverfront park and on the rest of the neighborhood.

The riverfront park should have varying width and a major focal point to create elements of interest and strong visual impact.

Use development to create a strong edge delineating the land/water interface and providing a sense of containment.

#### Linkages:

Widen and improve Commercial Avenue and make it two-way to serve as the major north-south traffic artery in East Cambridge.

Provide for clear, safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle traffic flows across Commercial Avenue and through riverfront development to the river.

Create a continuous open space link between the Memorial Drive greenway and the proposed Charlestown Navy Yard and Paul Revere Park to the north.

#### Design Details:

Reinforce riverfront focal point through creation of an active port image. Accomplish this by consolidating scattered docking into a single public facility including space for the MDC proposed water taxi.

## District 2: Front Street

### Principles:

Encourage development on individual parcels that contributes to an overall upgrading of economic activities and job opportunities within the area. Build an image of a unified, high quality employment center.

Arrange buildings and open spaces within individual development projects so that they contribute to a unified open space corridor leading to the Front.

Provide an interface with residential area that is a gentle, non-disruptive transition between districts.

Maximize reuse of existing buildings.

### Design Guidelines:

#### Use:

Stress technical office and research and development activities.

Consider wholesale trade activities and special construction trades as secondary, less desirable, uses.

#### Scale:

Limit maximum floor area ratio in the area to 2.0.

Limit building height with tighter restrictions nearer to residences:

35' in the blocks between Charles and Bent

45' between Bent and Rogers

65' between Rogers and Binney

### Form:

Build to the street line except for lots abutting residential lots or districts.

Urge new development to respect the existing street grid.

### Linkages:

Upgrade Binney Street as a two-way truck and auto route.

Develop a pedestrian/bicycle oriented open space corridor to provide a district connection between use in the area, neighborhood 3 and 4 and the riverfront.

Let Rogers Street serve more as a corridor providing access to the riverfront for local, bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

### Design Details:

Encourage articulated roof lines (as in 19th century industrial buildings).

Set back non-residential development abutting residences 20 or more feet or buffer them with a substantial landscape screen.

Locate new loading areas completely off-street and out of view from neighboring properties.

## District 3: Lechmere Canal and Square

### Principles:

Restructure Lechmere Square to be a handsome entrance to the city by encouraging appropriate development and by creating a safe, more efficient pedestrian and vehicular circulation.

Upgrade the quality of the existing regionally oriented commercial center.

Reclaim the Lechmere Canal as a significant visual element in the urban environment.

Create a functionally diverse and active urban focus with the Canal reclamation and surrounding development.

Create a strong and inviting pedestrian environment around the Canal.

Reuse old buildings which have some distinctive architectural character, historical value or economic value.

Encourage development along the western edge that provides a compatible and sensitive physical interface with District 4 — especially the residential community.

### Design Guidelines:

#### Use:

Require development in the area that provides expanded shopping facilities, general office space and new

housing. Stress commercial uses.

Increase the amount of recreational space.

Reinforce existing commercial activity along First Street with additional commercial establishments.

Construct structured parking facilities sufficient to meet needs of new development.

Further limit uses of lots abutting residential neighborhoods.

#### Scale:

Limit height and bulk of buildings to minimize their shading and visual dominance. Place stricter limitations closer to the residential area.

Limit building height around southern and western edge of canal.

Restrict overall floor area ratio of the district to 1.75.

Make density higher along Bridge Street and away from the existing residential area.

#### Form:

Enlarge and strengthen the Canal, redefining its edges and reducing the vertical distance between water level and abutting land.

Arrange new development so that it respects the First-Sixth Street grid.

Orient new development to interrelate activities in the Canal area and Bulfinch Courthouse area.

Locate new housing away from existing residential area.

**Linkages:**

Provide direct pedestrian linkage between relocated transit station and new development at First and Bridge Streets.

Upgrade Commercial Avenue as a two-way auto and truck route.

Design open space corridors that provide connections between the Lechmere Canal area and riverfront and the residential community.

Create a visual and access corridor between the canal and the old county courthouse buildings.

Create a major pedestrian corridor through the commercial area parallel to First Street connecting the canal to new Rogers Street open space axis.

Construct a walkway on the riverside of the Museum of Science connecting the Lechmere Canal open space with open space on the Boston side of the Charles.

**Design Details:**

Construct an aerated fountain at the head of the Canal to create an exciting visual focus and to cleanse canal-port water.

Orient and design new housing to oversee newly created open space.

Encourage development around the canal that is colorful in details and rich in open space amenities.

Preserve the old MDC stable and boathouse.

## **District 4: Historic East Cambridge and Bulfinch Square**

**Principles:**

Protect residences from adverse impacts of non-residential activities.

Preserve and creatively reuse historically and architecturally significant buildings in the area.

Avoid development which displaces existing residences or which disrupts the present social mix of the community.

Generally encourage development within the area that is neighborhood-oriented rather than city- or regionally-oriented.

Preserve the physical scale and grain of the East Cambridge residential neighborhood.

**Design Guidelines:**

**Use:**

Maintain dominance of residential uses.

Encourage business uses in the area that are generally neighborhood-oriented.

Preserve and reuse the Bulfinch Courthouse and nearby buildings that may become vacant. Use some of the space for public institutional activities such as cultural facilities.

Avoid encroachment of industrial uses into residential areas by selectively extending residential district zoning boundaries.

**Scale:**

Avoid further incongruous development by reducing permitted building bulk around new Middlesex County Courthouse.

Maintain a .75 floor area ratio limit for residential areas.

Limit maximum building height to 35'.

Business districts within the area to a 1.0 floor area ratio limit.

**Form:**

Prefer reuse and rehabilitation of existing buildings over new construction.

Encourage new construction that respects and relates to the form, character and detail of the historic housing stock.

**Linkages:**

Eliminate through traffic and truck routes through the residential neighborhood.

Provide convenient pedestrian linkages between residential neighborhood and new public open space along the riverfront.

Upgrade the Monsignor O'Brien Highway.

**Design Details:**

Buffer commercial and industrial facilities, parking areas, loading areas and other incompatible or unsightly activities from residences.

Avoid destroying or disrupting architectural details in any use, maintenance and rehabilitation of significant old buildings.